Greenfield, Oct. 30. 1862

My dear Mr May

In all the news I have seen of late from America — I mean in the newspapers — it has appeared to me that the North appeared more afraid of their wishes being baffled by a European intervention of some kind or other than by any efforts that the South could successfully make. I have often seen this subject adverted to & considering the distance of the U.S. from Europe & the impossibility of news flying rapidly from one to you & the comparatively little influence which active intervention or simple recognition of the South would be likely to have on the result of the contest I can wonder that this doubt should cause such anxiety on your side. Nevertheless I have always thought that the balance of influence on this side was against any meddling on the part of the English government — & that viewing the subject in a simply political point of view it was most unlikely that England in its official capacity would take a step for a long time to come — or until it was quite clear that the South had finally succeeded or actually succumbed. Now even the Times is opposed to recognition on the ground that the time has not come for it. Mr Gladstone's rash speech at Newcastle you have probably read & certainly heard of. It has been very much condemned for the precipitancy it evinced.

I abhor the Times and its kindred papers as much as you do. Its proslavery proclivities were well known to me long before this war was

was thought of — but its shameless partisanship & its utter disregard of truth & decency are notoriously, although I need not and ought not to have been surprised, for in the war between Austria & Hungary its advocacy of the Austrians was just as disgusting. For the general conduct of the English press I have no defence to make. I have been greatly disappointed in this respect for the general course of the press is undoubtedly indicative of the feelings of the people. In the last Edinburgh Review is an article on the American Question which ~~[illegible]~~ shows pretty clearly the causes which have influenced the public mind in England and in the last Westminster Review is another from the pen of Mr Mill reviewing his friend Cairnes book in which he touches on the same subject. I don't think much of the American plea that the Government of the U.S. has been in the hands of the Southern party & that from them have proceeded the studied insults & mortifications which England has of late years been obliged to submit to, from her sense of the wickedness of war & her unwillingness to risk her cotton supply by a contest which had no ~~so~~ other apparent object than to satisfy the thirst of the South in the States. It is clear to ~~[illegible]~~ me & has always been so that to bully England has been a trump card in the hands of unscrupulous Northern politicians Mr Seward among the number. I adhere to what I have so often said that you must weary of hearing it from me that the old anti-slavery feeling of England has been inevitably debased by the influence of the intercourse of American visitors, 99 of every 100 of whom were in the existing sense proslavery. Mind I am not excusing; I am only explaining. I have nothing to say for England, Ireland, Scotland & very little for the Free States. If slavery be abolished, it will be almost as much in ~~Hate~~ spite of the prejudice & negro hatred of the North & because she will be compelled to do so for her own safety & from regard to her own liberties — as in the teeth of Southern proslavery fanaticism.

As soon as we heard of the Proclamation, the outburst of Southern rage & of the righteous indignation on the part of the Times & the English proslavery papers was proof positive to me that the step was a wise one. The last Standard contains some most telling paragraphs from the pen of Theodore Tilton showing how well the Proclamation has been tried at the North. Also an article or number in which Professor Cairnes book is approvingly referred to. Many times I referred to Cairnes this book long ago. He is a young man of great ability, a sound logician, free from prejudice, self-conceit, & of most profound mind — as much so as any one I ever knew; not in the least pigheaded, or enthusiastic or liable to be influenced as I am by strong feelings, warm affections or personal prejudices — but determined to weigh facts and arguments with the most rigidly impartial scrutiny. I am extremely glad to hear that his book has been first reprinted in Boston — through the influence I think of Mrs G. F. Shaw, Mrs Chapman's friend who lives at Staten Island. The only part likely to offend American notions is I think the last chapter in which he proposes to coop the slave power into the cotton states on this side of the Mississippi — there to be starved out. My own notion is that if the North could succeed so far they can put an end to slavery altogether & thus prevent the evils of separate & antagonistic governments side by side which would result from easy concession to the slaveholders.

I know there are some good anti-slavery men here who think that the divided U.S. would not be so formidable & so unfriendly to England — & who also think that from the past proslavery conduct of the ~~[illegible]~~ so many of the people of the Free States & their dislike to the colored race, the chances of the latter would be better if their emancipation came round through the necessities of the South than the compulsion of the North. The threatened hostility of the North has had a deal to do in creating a desire for the separation of the U.S. into two powers which would have so much to do in watching each other that they would be unable to find time for gratuitous quarrels with Great Britain. I think it probable that the military spirit is & has long been more prevalent & popular with you than with us. With you a general has a greater reputation than a civilian. It is not so here. There is great jealousy of military men holding the reins of power & none of that class except a man of unusual ability & proved integrity such as the Duke of Wellington was, is ~~greater~~ regarded with any great popularity or wields any political influence. The Duke owed far more to his reputation for honesty than to his military fame for the confidence with which he was regarded.

However ~~the~~ my reason for wishing ~~to~~ well to the North is not that I regard the people or their past policy with unqualified approval, but that I think the future interests of the human family are far more likely to be promoted by the success of the North than by the triumph of the South.

I am confident that the secret ill will of the powerful aristocratic portion of our people has had much to do in promoting the unpopularity of the northern side in these islands. They would be glad to see the Model Republic prove a failure

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I printed Cairnes's book, & was in constant consultation with him as it proceeded, and my collection of Anti Slavery books was of great use to him. This evening he is to deliver a lecture on the American contest before the Young Men's Christian Association and Lord Carlisle (the Lord Lieutenant) is to be present. He has heard from Mr G. F. Shaw that his book has been republished in Boston & the publisher has promised to send him a copy. His Slave Power has met with great applause from the pro-Northern English Press & has been carefully let alone by the friends of the South. The last Saturday Review contained an impudent article intended to show that the Slaveholders had no desire whatever to re-establish the Slave trade — & some of those who perhaps actually talk as the Southern divines used to do about the wickedness of interfering with the arrangements of Providence respecting slavery. I for one have never (since I began to feel an interest in the cause) regarded the anti slavery feeling of the mass of our people as ~~more~~ any better than a mere sentiment.

I did not think when I began I would say so much on this subject. Whatever may happen to England or America, to the North or to the South, I think I may congratulate you & all our friends that the days of Slavery are numbered — I hope the Democrats may be defeated in the approaching elections — & I little doubt that the Slaveholders will be put down & a happy future open before your great country

In ~~the~~ a late number of the Spectator the editor noticed with great disgust an article in the N.Y. Tribune of Sept. 26 in which Greeley or somebody for him offered the South any guarantees for Slavery provided the leaders would allow the Union to remain intact. Cairnes could hardly believe his eyes. Nor could I. I wrote to a friend in London who knows the Editor of the Spectator Mr Richd Hutton (son of the late Dr Hutton of Derby a Unitarian minister) and he said he would show the paper to any one who chose to call at his office.

The Daily News, the Spectator, the London Review, the National Review, the Westminster, the Bradford Chronicle, the Leicestershire Mercury, the Manchester Examiner & many other able journals & periodicals are staunch to the Northern side. I should not forget Macmillan. The Cornhill Magazine in which Thackeray has been a presiding head and which his influence is still considerable goes for the South. You know in the Virginians he toadied the Slaveholders for the sake of American popularity.

There are plenty of people on both sides the water who are no credit to either nation but let us hope it will be for the best and that our race of both our countries will come out improved ~~after~~ from this terrible trial.

As to myself I am in good health and to outward appearance just the same as ever. But I have suffered a loss which time cannot repair. Nobody who did not know my dear wife personally could [illegible] such an extraordinary combination of charming mental & moral endowments without a single unamiable alloy of any kind. I declare to you that before I ever thought of her dying before me I often wondered that I should have been so lucky as to be blessed with such a companion. Born a Quakeress in a rigidly trained family and therefore liable to that stiffness of manner which such training induces, she was a natural born lady, in whom I never saw a gesture or intonation that might not have befitted a Duchess. She was tender hearted, gentle, compassionate, and utterly unaffected. Her perceptions were very quick & she had a remarkable sagacity in giving the best & the soundest advice when consulted. Before our marriage we corresponded to a most voluminous extent. We did it in order to become known to one another by the fullest & freest epistolary communication. I kept all these letters & when she was gone, I turned ~~back~~ to them as if to converse with her. But I found it very racking, as it left me good for nothing & I was obliged to put it by for a while. Every one who wrote to me after I lost her said that there was no help but in time & God's help. I don't think time can ever lessen the feeling of my loss—for I can hardly expect to meet with any one who can be any such friend, companion & counsellor to me as she was.

You know Eliza Wigham. I saw her today. I think she is nearer in spirit to what my wife was than any

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to one else I knew — though I am sure. She had such intellectual gifts — her wit, genius, and originality — qualities which my dear Hannah had in a remarkable degree, with an utter absence of the tendency to display ~~[illegible]~~ them.

Shortly after her death it was suggested to me by a friend who is something of an amateur artist that a German painter in Dublin could make a good portrait in oils from the Carte taken as you have & some photographs & daguerreotypes with which I could supply him. This he has succeeded in doing ~~[illegible]~~ to a surprising degree and today my elder daughter and I called & gave him some directions as to finishing touches which will I expect ~~[illegible]~~ make it almost as good a likeness as if she sate for it while living.

I am greatly obliged to Ellis daughter my friend Adeline, whose thoughtful kindness I warmly appreciate, for the [illegible] she has given me. I have labeled the standing figure — as I also postponed ~~the~~ pale faced likeness very nearly the same as the one which goes to this letter — but rather younger — for it was done some years ago before this terrible war which must have made all thoughtful Americans look older. Will you tell her with my cordial thanks that I can readily send the carte to Miss E. ~~[illegible]~~ in a letter I hope to do so tomorrow.

One of the results of my new position in the world is that I have far less energy than I used to have for all else but my main thing — & that a disposition to indolence & procrastination often comes over me & hinders me from doing what I ought to do.

MS. B.1.6.v.(?)

In the middle of our trouble yesterday I was thunderstruck by the report that had reached Dublin that McClellan's army had been called on to make an unconditional surrender — the most astounding piece of political intelligence I ever heard — astounding for the momentousness of the influence the fact would have had — had it been a fact — upon the development of civilization in times to come. Shocking as the most terrible blow that any great nation had ever received.

But I was greatly relieved this morning to find from later accounts that the report was without foundation. Nevertheless if what I ~~hear~~ read in your own papers be true little change for the better has taken place in your public mind towards the suffering race who are the innocent cause of all this fearful outpouring of blood & money — and it did seem as if something had come to force your people to a stronger sense of their complicity in the national crime which gave birth to your awful political volcano. I have handed your letter lately received with the statement of account to my son Alfred. I wish you had informed them how your [illegible] son is getting on in the South. What is your own impression of the actual state of affairs. It is regarded here with deep interest & anxiety. I hope you may be able to see Professor Cairnes's book of which one copy went to the Editor of the Atlantic Monthly of whom you might possibly get a loan of it. I would like to know what you think of the book in which I take a great interest & which was written in ~~with~~ a most conscientious spirit

Ever affectionately yours

Richd D Webb

Will you thank your cousin S. J. May for his kind gift of the Barons of the South — I hope with all my heart they may not also become the Lords of the North. If they do, wo betide the prospects of civilized humanity!

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